

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

WITH

MR. BRUCE,

HER MAJESTY'S ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY

AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

IN

CHINA.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
1860.

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Further Correspondence with Mr. Bruce, Her Majesty's
Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary
in China.

No. 1.

Mr. Bruce to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received September 27.)

My Lord,

Shanghai, August 1, 1859.

I HAVE the honour to inclose copies of letters received from Sir Charles van Straubenzee, and of my reply to him.

I have in consequence addressed the Earl Canning, stating the necessity of reinforcing the garrison of Canton, and requesting him to do so at once, if possible.

The speedy arrival of even one regiment will go far to keep the south of China quiet, and a reinforcement of troops will be more useful than an augmentation of the naval force on the station.

I have, &c.

(Signed) FREDERICK W. A. BRUCE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 1.

Major-General Sir C. van Straubenzee to Mr. Bruce.

Sir,

** Head-Quarters, Hong Kong, July 22, 1859.*

HAVING heard through the public press, and from other sources, the disastrous results of the expedition to the North, I have the honour to request your Excellency will be pleased to inform me whether we are now to consider ourselves at war with China, or whether matters are to continue as at present in Canton, so long as the Chinese remain in a passive state.

I have also to request that I may be favoured with such information as may be in your Excellency's power to afford me, with regard to operations recommended, in order that I may take such necessary steps in the way of preparation as may tend to facilitate the movements of any future expedition to the north of China.

It is unnecessary for me to remind your Excellency that should it be intended to assemble a large force to proceed to the North, it will be incumbent upon me to make early preparations on a proportionate scale, the expense of which I should not feel myself justified in incurring on the mere fact of our late defeat, and without any knowledge of intentions as to the future.

I have, &c.

(Signed) C. T. VAN STRAUBENZEE.

Inclosure 2 in No. 1.

Major-General Sir C. van Straubenzee to Mr. Bruce.

Sir,

Hong Kong, July 22, 1859.

AS the late events off the Peiho will in all probability produce a state of affairs in Canton, similar to that of last summer, I am desirous to represent to

your Excellency the very small effective European garrison in that city, viz., 688 rank and file, including artillery and engineers, but exclusive of police and otherwise employed, such as pioneers, commissariat, &c. ; to this force, I presume, will shortly be added the battalion of Royal Marine Light Infantry and Company of Sappers lately employed under Admiral Hope, C.B. We have still ten or twelve weeks of summer to go through, which will cause a serious diminution in the number of effectives, more particularly if much harassed, as they must be in the event of a renewal of troubles. The Native Infantry effectives are about 1,300 rank and file. I would, therefore, beg to recommend to your Excellency that our two troop-steamers be sent for such European reinforcements as can be spared either from Ceylon or India, so that, if necessary, we may at least be in a position to strike a blow in the south of China, so soon as the cold weather admits of action. As the whole of the Marines by the first week in November will barely form one battalion effective for service, I would strongly urge that at least two regiments be applied for without delay, and if happily not required for the south of China, they will be in readiness for any operations that may hereafter be determined upon.

I have, &c.
(Signed) C. T. VAN STRAUBENZEE.

Inclosure 3 in No. 1.

Mr. Bruce to Major-General Sir C. van Straubenzee.

Sir,

Shanghai, July 31, 1859.

I SHOULD have written to you sooner on the failure of my attempt to reach Peking had I not thought it advisable to await some indication of the course the Chinese Government intend to pursue.

As far as I can judge from a communication that has been received by M. de Bourboulon from Ho, the Imperial Commissioner, the Chinese Government has no intention of disturbing us at the ports. The letter treats the collision at the mouth of the river as unintentional on both sides, and as proceeding from our ignorance of the fact that preparations had been made at another place to receive us ; and he even goes so far as to suggest that we had better return to the North, as we shall be received with due courtesy. I have no doubt that Mr. Ward, the American Minister, will bring down some proposals for accommodation.

I do not think, therefore, that orders will be sent from Peking to commence at Canton the hostile proceedings of last year, unless we were to assume the offensive, and in that case a large force would be required ; for the blow, if struck at all, must be struck in the North, and we know that during the last year a large force has been accumulated, consisting in part of men who show considerable skill in the management of artillery, whatever may be their value as soldiers in the field. As my object is not to fetter the action of Her Majesty's Government, my language to the Chinese authorities will continue to be, that I consider my mission to Peking at an end for the present, and that I have referred home for fresh instructions.

But I shall avoid, as much as possible, doing or saying anything from which the Chinese may infer that I consider what has passed in the North as an act of war, or as necessarily leading to a rupture of friendly relations ; and, moreover, if they were to make a proper apology, and consent to receive me on becoming terms at Peking, I should not decline the overture ; though I do not anticipate, after what has taken place, that they will make any proposal which I could accept as satisfactory.

I do not think, therefore, that it would be desirable to make preparations in the South with a view to a campaign in the North, before knowing what Her Majesty's Government will determine on that point ; but it is obvious that we ought to be prepared for any contingency that may happen in Canton or its neighbourhood ; and as your Excellency seems to think that your garrison requires to be reinforced, I will address his Excellency the Governor-General of India on the subject, and forward copies of your letters to Admiral Hope, with whom it rests to dispose of the transports alluded to. One contains the wounded, and is not, I suppose, available for India. It will be advisable that

your Excellency should write your views on the amount of reinforcement required to the Commander-in-chief in India, calculating it with a view to Canton and the position of affairs in the South.

I have, &c.
(Signed) FREDERICK W. A. BRUCE.

Inclosure 4 in No. 1.

Mr. Bruce to Earl Canning.

My Lord,

Shanghai, July 31, 1859.

YOUR Excellency will have heard ere this of the untoward issue of the attempt made by the French Minister and myself to reach Peking with a view of exchanging the ratifications of the Treaty and establishing direct diplomatic relations with the Government. I will cause copies of my despatches giving an account of what took place to be sent to your Excellency by the first opportunity.

In the meantime, I beg to call your Excellency's attention to two letters received from Sir Charles van Straubenzee on his position at Canton.

Hitherto, I do not see any symptoms of an intention on the part of the Chinese Government to push matters further. They seem satisfied with having kept us out of the Peiho river, and thereby got rid of a visit, the conditions of which would have asserted effectually the principle of international equality, and laid the foundation of future diplomatic intercourse on a proper footing.

I have resolved, in concert with my French colleague, to take no further step in this mission until we receive instructions. We are not in a position to bring any effectual pressure to bear in the North, and I hope by a reserved attitude to avoid further complications until we are better prepared. But I think it advisable to bring before your Excellency's notice the position of Canton, as events in the North might encourage fresh troubles there should the garrison be reduced by sickness, or not be strong enough to act in the neighbourhood against any hostile bodies that might collect for the purpose of annoying us. I have requested Sir Charles van Straubenzee to write to the Commander-in-chief in India as to the amount of reinforcements he may think necessary. In the meantime, I cannot too strongly urge the immediate dispatch of an European regiment, should it be in your Excellency's power to spare one for this service. Its arrival will have the best effect, whatever decision Her Majesty's Government may ultimately adopt.

I do not know whether Admiral Hope will be able to dispatch one of the troop-ships now in China, to which the General alludes. The other is at present used as the hospital for the wounded, and certainly could not be made available for some time. I will communicate with him immediately; but if your Excellency has at your disposal the means of affording assistance, I think it would be advisable not to delay it.

I have, &c.
(Signed) FREDERICK W. A. BRUCE.

No. 2.

Lord J. Russell to Mr. Bruce.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, October 29, 1859.

FROM the terms of your despatch of the 10th August,* I infer that, at the time when you wrote it, you thought it not improbable that the Chinese Government might shortly address to you some communication with the view of inviting you to proceed to Peking for the exchange of the ratifications of the Treaty of Tien-tsin.

If any such proposal has been made to you, and if it be still unanswered when you receive this despatch, you will state, in reply, that you are not authorized to entertain it until the Chinese Government shall have made a formal

* See "Correspondence with Mr. Bruce," presented to Parliament, January 24, 1860, No. 15.

apology for the act of the troops who fired on Her Britannic Majesty's ships of war from the Takoo forts in June last.

You will add, that Her Majesty's Government require that, when you go to Peking for the exchange of the ratifications of the Treaty, you shall proceed up the Peiho river to Tien-tsin in a British vessel, and that provision be made by the Chinese authorities for the conveyance of yourself and your suite with due honour from Tien-tsin to Peking.

Should the assurances given to you by the Chinese Government on these heads be satisfactory, you will make arrangements for proceeding to Peking at the earliest period at which it may be safe and convenient for you to undertake the voyage. It will be proper that a naval force should accompany you to the mouth of the Peiho, and directions to this effect will be forwarded to Admiral Hope.

Should you experience any unbecoming treatment, either at Peking, or on your journey to or from the capital, you will return to the Gulf, and place the matter in the hands of the naval Commander-in-chief.

You will take an early opportunity of apprizing the Ministers of the Emperor of China that, in consequence of the attempt made to obstruct your passage to Peking in June last, when you were proceeding thither to exchange the ratifications of the Treaty of Tien-tsin, Her Majesty's Government consider that the understanding entered into between the Earl of Elgin and the Imperial Commissioners Kweiliang and Hwashana, with respect to the residence of the British Minister in China, is at an end, and that it rests henceforward exclusively with Her Majesty, by the terms of Article II of the Treaty of Tien-tsin, to decide whether or not she shall instruct her Minister to take up his abode permanently at Peking.

If, however, no pacific overtures shall have been addressed to you by the Chinese Government before the time when this despatch reaches you, you will, immediately on its receipt, communicate to the Prime Minister of the Emperor the demands of Her Majesty's Government, as stated above, and inform him that, unless, within a period of thirty days from the date of your communication, you receive from him a reply conveying to you the Emperor's unqualified assent to these demands, the British naval and military authorities will proceed to adopt such measures as they may deem advisable for the purpose of compelling the Emperor of China to observe the engagements contracted for him by his Plenipotentiaries at Tien-tsin, and approved by his Imperial Edict of July 1858.

On grounds of humanity, Her Majesty's Government would be desirous, if possible, to avoid the necessity of having to undertake military operations on a great scale against the capital of the Chinese Empire. They will learn, therefore, with satisfaction, that the measures which I have indicated have had the desired effect, and induced the Chinese Emperor to accede to the moderate terms which by this despatch you are instructed to offer for his acceptance.

It is necessary, however, to be prepared for a different result, and it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to make such arrangements as will enable a considerable military force to be dispatched from the South with the change of the monsoon, if it should be then requisite to undertake operations on land.

I have only to add that it is not the intention of Her Majesty's Government that you should consider yourself to be bound by your instructions to insist on a personal interview with the Emperor. It is essential that you should correspond on terms of equality with the chief officers of the Empire, and that you should refuse to submit to any degrading ceremonial, either on the occasion of an audience with the Emperor, or on any other; but you will be guided by your own discretion, and in some degree by the practice of the Representatives of other Great Western Powers, in determining whether or not you will press the demand that the Emperor of China shall receive you, in the only manner in which you could consent to be received, namely, with the forms which on such occasions are customary in the West.

Her Majesty's Government are in communication with the Government of the Emperor of the French, in reference to the subject of this despatch.

No. 3.

Lord J. Russell to Mr. Bruce.

Sir,

Foreign Office, November 10, 1859.

SINCE my despatch of the 29th ultimo was written, I have received and laid before the Queen your despatch of the 3rd September.*

It appears by this despatch and its inclosures, that the Emperor of China now fully sanctions the resistance made by the forts at Takoo to the passage of Her Majesty's ships up the River Peiho.

He states that Takoo was fortified by his command, and that the Envoys of the different nations were told by Kweiliang and Hwashana at Shanghai, that Takoo was so fortified, and that they must go round by Peh-tang.

Now, although the denial of a passage to the capital by the usual and most convenient route would have been evidence of an unfriendly disposition, yet it was a matter upon which you might have remonstrated and negotiated, without having recourse to force to clear the passage.

You say, however, with regard to these alleged warnings :—"These assertions are directly contrary to the truth, though I think it not improbable the Commissioners may have represented the matter in this light to the Emperor. Neither in the letters that passed between the Commissioners and the Envoys, nor during the interviews Mr. Ward had with them, was a word said of defences at Takoo, nor was any allusion made to Peh-tang."

Thus it appears that neither you nor M. Bourboulon received any warning; nay, when the Admiral arrived at the mouth of the Peiho, so far from having an intimation, from authority, that the passage of the Envoys up the Peiho was to be resisted, he was assured that the fortifications were made by the militia of the country as a defence against pirates, and that a passage should be opened to allow of vessels proceeding by the river.

The soldiers at the forts had no doubt ascertained the correct range of the palisades and stakes where the French and British vessels were certain to be stopped, and thus they had all the benefit of a prepared ambushade.

Whether the Emperor was cognizant of this act, or whether it was directed by his officers, it is an outrage for which the Chinese Government must be accounted responsible.

Unless, therefore, the most ample apology should be promptly made, and the other demands specified in my previous despatch shall be complied with, you are instructed to state that a large pecuniary indemnity will be demanded by Her Majesty's Government from that of China.

I am, &c.

(Signed) J. RUSSELL.

* See "Correspondence with Mr. Bruce," presented to Parliament, January 24, 1860, No. 18.

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE with Mr. Bruce, Her
Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister
Plenipotentiary in China.

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